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PROJECT CONCERN--A CASE STUDY IN URBAN-SUBURBAN COOPERATION. POSITION PAPER.

BY- MAHAN, THOMAS W.
HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CONN.

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PROJECT CONCERN SEEKS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE LOWER ACHIEVEMENT OF DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IS AN "ARTIFACT" OF A NEGATIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE SLUM NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE SLUM SCHOOL. TO COUNTERACT THIS EFFECT, THE PROJECT HAS BUSED OVER 250 INNER CITY MINORITY GROUP CHILDREN, FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIFTH GRADE, TO FIVE MIDDLE CLASS SUBURBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS ON THE PERIPHERY OF HARTFORD. ONE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP (E-GROUP) OF 213 CHILDREN RECEIVES SUPPORTIVE SERVICES INVOLVING REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE, SCHOOL-HOME LIAISON, AND POSITIVE ADULT IDENTIFICATION FIGURES. THE REMAINING 42 PUPILS, THE OTHER E-GROUP, ARE BEING EXPOSED TO A SUBURBAN SCHOOL PLACEMENT WITHOUT SUPPORTIVE SERVICES. DATA WILL BE COLLECTED ON CRITERION VARIABLES RELATED TO SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND ON SUCH OTHER DIMENSIONS AS PUPIL ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION, FAMILY PARTICIPATION, AND CLASSROOM CLIMATE. THE TWO E-GROUPS WILL BE COMPARED WITH GROUPS OF INNER CITY SCHOOL CHILDREN WHO HAVE OR HAVE NOT RECEIVED SUPPORTIVE ASSISTANCE. IT IS FELT THAT THE TREND TOWARD CUMULATIVE DEFICIT SHOWN BY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN MIGHT BE REVERSED BY CREATING A "DISSONANCE" WITHIN THE STUDENT'S SELF-PERCEPTIONS WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE REINFORCEMENT OF POSITIVE BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES. THE SUBURBAN PEER GROUP WILL PRESENT AN EMULATIVE MODEL, WHICH, ALONG WITH THE SUPPORT OF AN INDIGENOUS ADULT IDENTIFICATION FIGURE, WILL HELP TO BRING ABOUT A POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF THE DISADVANTAGED PUPILS. THE URBAN-SUBURBAN COOPERATION THAT THIS PROJECT REQUIRED IS FINANCIALLY AND OTHERWISE FEASIBLE FOR CITIES FRINGED BY MIDDLE CLASS SUBURBS. THIS PAPER WAS DELIVERED AT THE CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AND RACIAL IMBALANCE IN THE CITY (HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT, MARCH 2-3, 1967). (NH)

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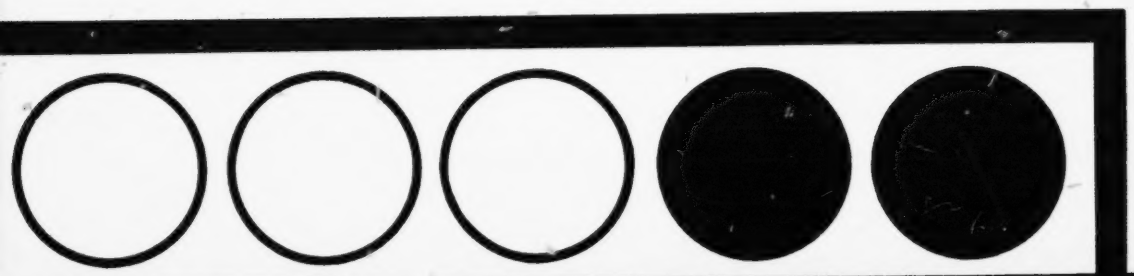
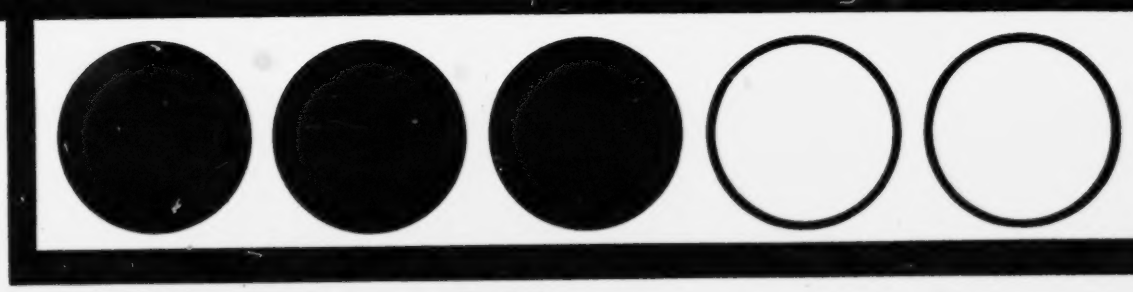
BY DR. THOMAS W. MAHAN
DIRECTOR, PROJECT CONCERN





CONFERENCE ON
EDUCATION AND RACIAL IMBALANCE IN THE CITY

HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT HOTEL AMERICA

MARCH 2—3, 1967

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I. Introduction

Project Concern is an educational experiment which is built upon accumulating evidence from two sources. It recognizes the inescapable conclusion that youngsters from lower socio-economic backgrounds living in disadvantaged areas of the inner city fail to respond to the typical school evironment in terms of desired academic achievement (Deutsch, 1963: Deutsch, 1964; John, 1963; Kennedy, Van de Riet, and White, 1963). This lack of expected response becomes increasingly dramatic as the youngster moves along in school creating what Deutsch (1964) has called the phenomenon of "cumulative deficit". Although this pattern is reasonably consistent and predictable for all disadvantaged groups, it is clearly more pronounced and devastating in the minority group cultures of the Negro and Puerto Rican (Deutsch, 1964; Osborne, 1960; Pettigrew, 1964). This creates a significant educational problem which has profound implications for the society as a whole.

The apparent remedy for this situation is to change the nature of the inner city school which serves the disadvantaged areas. Programs of this sort, generally termed compensatory, have been tried under a series of circumstances and in a number of forms. The results, although ambiguous, have failed to clarify any universally applicable program or technique which can be expected to prevent or correct the educational deficit so plainly evident among disadvantaged youth. This conclusion seems inescapable in spite of the heroic efforts and considerable expense involved in many of the projects (cf., e.g., Landers, 1963; Marburger, 1963; Shephard, 1963). The question which must be faced is whether the inner city school provides the environment in which dramatic change in educational performance can be expected.

These two streams of accumulating evidence create the matrix from which Project Concern emerges. The stark reality of the educational deficit repeatedly found in disadvantaged youth creates an uncomfortable situation for educational theorists and practitioners alike; yet the easy answer of genetic inferiority will not stand. Out of the drab overall picture arise those dramatic case studies which illustrate the potential for change. At the same time, the research evidence underlines the fact that intra-group differences are far more striking than inter-group differences while the support for the concept of the "educability" of intelligence continues to grow. (Clarke and Clarke, 1953; Klineberg, 1963; Lee, 1951; Pettigrew, 1964; Hunt, 1964; Katz, 1964).

Project Concern is designed to demonstrate that the depressed educational achievement of the disadvantaged child is an artifact of the interaction of the neighborhood and the neighborhood school in environments where schools find themselves focusing on repressive measures for behavioral control rather than on the stimulation of growth and where there is a mutually accepted standard of limited

expectation. In other words, it holds that the observed disability is not intrinsic to the individuals or the culture, but rather results from an environmental interaction which is reinforced by stereotypes cultivated by both the disadvantaged population and the majority. To test adequately this assumption placement in an educational environment which both focuses around stimulation rather than control and is freed of the binding aspect of limited expectation seems necessary. Project Concern is providing this different educational environment by placing inner city disadvantaged youth in suburban schools where the emphasis is on discovery and learning and where expectations are high:

More specifically Project Concern has as its objectives the exploration of the effectiveness of suburban school placement as a stimulant for educational growth of the inner city child and the demonstration of the economic, political, and educational feasibility of such a plan as an educational intervention. In detail the objectives are as follows:

1. To assess the range of possible academic growth for typical disadvantaged youth within an inner city.

2. To determine the relative effectiveness of four different educational interventions as models for programs for disadvantaged inner city youth.

3. To gather data and analyse them in terms of the impact of suburban school placement on inner city youth along a comprehensive domain of dimensions.

4. To demonstrate the fiscal and operational feasibility of urban-suburban collaboration in such a program.

5. To train professional and non-professional staff in the education of inner city youth.

6. To attempt to isolate the pupil, family, school and teacher characteristics associated with significant changes.

7. To provide relevant data for subsequent urban-suburban collaborative efforts.

8. To disseminate information about the findings of the Project.

II. Importance of the Project

Project Concern is of prime importance as an educational experiment because of several unique features. These are summarized below in an effort to communicate the relevance of this project to education as a whole. In terms of numbers alone,

Project Concern could be classified as a token effort; however, in terms of its implications it takes on rather monumental significance. The items below attempt to convey this aspect.

1. Project Concern youth have been randomly selected from the total population of disadvantaged inner city youth attending Hartford Public Schools (grades K-5). This allows for inferences in terms of the typical child. This randomness has been preserved in spite of the necessity of parental agreement; only 4% of the original sample declined to participate.

2. Project Concern youth have the characteristics associated with inner city poverty situations:
   a) over 50% of the families are on welfare
   b) over 67% of the Ss in grades 3, 4, and 5 have achievement profiles in the bottom decile on national norms
   c) the mean mental ability score is also in the bottom 10% on national norms.

3. Project Concern has a carefully designed four cell experimental model which will permit an evaluation of the relative effectiveness of four different interventions:
   a) placement in a suburban school.
   b) placement in a suburban school with remedial-supportive assistance provided by the Project.
   c) placement in an inner city school.
   d) placement in an inner city school with comprehensive and intensive compensatory services.

4. Project Concern has a well conceptualized theoretical rationale (cf. infra) as a basis for its operational program.

5. Project Concern has been developed in a fashion which will permit replication in other areas without extraordinary expense; it is a financially practicable intervention.

6. Project Concern is collecting data designed to answer the following questions:
   a) Is there significant change in measured mental ability?
   b) Is there significant change in measured academic performance along several dimensions:
      i) reading
      ii) arithmetic
      iii) listening
      iv) creativity
   c) Is there an adverse effect upon the suburban class into which youngsters are introduced?
   d) What is the social status of the experimental Ss both in the suburbs and in the inner city neighborhood?

e) Are there signs of change along inferred intervening variables such as:
   i) trust
   ii) sense of self-responsibility
   iii) motivation
f) What is the impact upon parents and siblings? Three major sources will be drawn upon for data: pupils, teachers, and families.

III. Operational Design

A. Present Operational Structure

Project Concern is presently bussing 255 inner city youngsters, grades kindergarten through five, into five suburbs (Farmington [66 children], Manchester [62 children], Simsbury [25 children], South Windsor [24 children], and West Hartford [78 children]) into 33 schools and 123 classes. The current ethnic breakdown is as follows:

Negro	224
Puerto Rican	24
White	7

These youngsters are placed in regular classes in the suburbs corresponding to the class in which they would be if they had continued in Hartford Public Schools.

The 255 experimental Ss are divided into two groups: a) 213 Ss are scattered throughout the five towns in 27 schools and they receive supportive services from a team consisting of a professional teacher and a non-professional aide. A team is provided for every 25 Ss and the team is made up of a mother indigenous to the North End of Hartford and a teacher of Negro extraction. (In actual operation two teachers are of white extraction because of the scarcity of Negro applicants.) These teams provide three major functions:

i) remedial assistance
ii) school-home liaison
iii) positive adult identification figures

a) 42 Ss, all in the Town of West Hartford in six schools, who do not receive supportive service from an external team.

Each school system involved in the Project has assigned to a member of its administrative staff the functions of coordinator with the Project central office. This provides a clearinghouse for communication and increases the ease of operation tremendously.

The central office staff works primarily through the town coordinators and the supportive team. The present make-up of the central office staff is asfollows:

Director	(Thomas W. Mahan, Ph. D.)
Assistant Director	(Albert A. Thompson, Ph. D.)
Coqrdinator of Aides	(Gertrude Johnson)
Community Worker	(Mary Michelson)
Community Worker	(Neil Kennedy)
Executive Assistant	(Linda I. Forman)
Secretarial Assistant	(Arneita Taylor)

The major facets of the central office operation can be grouped into the following roles:

a) coordination and supervision
b) research
c) public relations
d) community services
e) supportive service to child, family and school
f) planning and evaluation

In addition there are two formally established advisory committees. One is a broad based Advisory Council made up of representatives from participating school boards, State Department of Education, Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Negro community. This Council advises the Director on general operational problems and serves as a forum for discussion of new developments.

The second advisory committee, labelled as the Professional Advisory Committee, is made up of the following members:

Dr. John F. Cawley, University of Connecticut
Dr. John Noble, Brandeis University
Dr. David V. Tiedeman, Harvard University
Dr. Thomas W. Mahan, Project Director, ex-officio

This Committee advises on professional questions relating to the research design, data collection and data analysis areas. Final decisions on such topics are made by this group.

B. Data Collection

The collection of data focuses around a number of major criterion variables and also around a syndrome of inferred intervening variables. The prime emphasis is on the criterion variables which relate to school performance. For this aspect a sub-contract with the University of Connecticut has been let and plans call for four testings: October, 1966 (already completed); May, 1967; October, 1967; and May, 1968. These criterion variables and the data sources are listed below:

1) Mental ability - Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children; Test of Primary Mental Abilities; Draw-A-Man

2) Academic achievement - reading; arithmetic; listening; creativity-flexibility

3) Sociometric status - sociometric questionnaires; teacher ratings.

In addition careful analysis is being given to other dimensions, several of which are best described as intervening variables. Among these are:

1) Pupil attitude - teacher logs; Sarason anxiety scales; interviews

2) Pupil motivation - attendance; homework performance; teacher reports

3) Family participation - teacher and central office logs

4) Classroom climate - teacher logs; observation; motion picture study.

A further area of study is the reaction and performance of the suburban youngsters.

C. Progress to Date

There are as yet, no data available other than the basic results from the pretesting to evaluate progress along the major criterion variables. There are, however, other areas where some data are available and these are presented below.

1) Attendance - average daily attendance exceeds 90%.

2) Drop-outs - from September 7 to September 30 nine youngsters were removed from the program as follows:

a) two moved from Hartford
b) two were removed for emotional problems
c) five (four kdgns; one first grader) were withdrawn at parental request.

From September 30 to January 19 two additional youngsters were withdrawn at their own request because of extreme academic difficulties.

3) Parental involvement - over 90% of the families have participated in at least one school activity in the suburbs.

4) Pupil acceptance - all signs indicate that the experimental Ss have been well accepted. Perhaps the most striking sign of this is their participation in after-school activities.

5) There are no signs of the predicted "psychological trauma" or of the "physical strain" from the experience.

D. Future Prospects

Central to the Project Concern study is its thesis that it is a practical model for large scale intervention in those cities which are fringed by suburbs. The following facts underline the operational and financial feasibility of large scale expansion:

1) There are 16 communities within the present radius of operation;
2) These 16 communities in the current academic year (1966-67) have 1962 classrooms, K-6;
3) Legislation has been introduced into the 1967 General Assembly (HB 3912) which, if enacted, would:

   a) establish the legality of inter-community compacts for education of the disadvantaged;
   b) establish standards for such programs;
   c) provide partial financial assistance for pupil costs, transportation costs, and school building costs;

4) Operating costs for full-scale implementation can be realistically estimated at $300 to $350 per pupil above the tuition cost.

IV. Theoretical Rationale

Project Concern, although directly related to the problem of de facto segregation, is not essentially an experiment in intergration; rather, it is an experiment in educational intervention designed to counteract the limited influence of urban education on the disadvantaged. Research has described the "cumulative deficit" which the child from the low socio-economic environment tends to exhibit in his school performance -- a phenomenon which is dramatically accentuated among the non-white poor -- and has underlined the profound task involved in reversing the trend. A review of the literature quickly communicates the impression that the problem goes beyond special teaching techniques, enriched materials, and better programming.

Project Concern will be evaluated by measured changes in pupil behavior. Nonetheless, it is important to outline, at lease in skeletal fashion, the theoretical base from which these changes are predicted. Basically, the research stems from a conviction that changes in stimuli, environment and other input data can result in changes in response or output behavior. However, it also felt that cognitive patterns for coping with formal learning situations and the affective responses which accompany these

patterns have been well crystallized at the time of school entrance. This results in the use of traditional response patterns which, for the disadvantaged, are frequently ineffective for school goals. To counteract this established tendency it seems best to present the subject with an intense and pervasive experience in a radically different environment so that new responses can be provoked. This is the first stage of Project Concern -- to create some dissonance within the pupil in terms of his usual perception of himself in relation to school and to take advantage of this period of flux by reinforcing positive behaviors and attitudes.

The second aspect of the intervention model is tied to the influence of peers as a basis for the development of role fulfilling behaviors. By placing a limited number of inner city youth (about 10% of the classroom population) in a suburban classroom these same youth will be constantly in contact with models of behavior more in keeping with school values. By limiting the impact of models which reinforce the current, ineffective behavior and emphasizing the impact of different, but reasonably consistent models, it is hoped that some "shaping" of the pupils' learning styles will take place in the direction of increased academic performance.

As a catalyst to prevent too much dissonance which might create a withdrawal and/or rejection reaction, significant adult figures who share much of the child's heritage but also exhibit the desired characteristics in terms of attitudes toward school and learning are provided in the supportive team. The effectiveness of this additional factor in the change process is a focus of the research design and, hopefully, evidence will be available at the termination of the project to determine the differential impact of the learning environment as separated from the impact of adult identification figures.

In essence, Project Concern focuses around the change in perception, already to a large extent stereotyped, which can be accomplished by a confrontation with experiences highly charged with novelty but also in a context of interpersonal support. It is predicted that changes will take place and that they will take place in the direction of the models which the suburban youth present to the bussed pupils.

V. Research Design

Project Concern is designed to determine the relative effectiveness of a radically different educational environment as a preventive and corrective intervention in the education of urban youth from the inner city. The theoretical rationale for the position has been discussed above, but the pragmatic aspects must be mentioned briefly here. The "vacant seat" basis for pupil assignment has resulted in considerable variability in the placement with some classes having only one experimental S while others have four. This in turn has created a situation

which results in the experimental Ss being spread across thirty-three (33) schools while control Ss are drawn from five (5) schools. Hopefully, this diversity will have a self-cancelling effect which will underline the impact of the experimental variable - the treatment procedure. In this same regard, it is also important to stress that the Experimental Ss not receiving external supportive services are all placed in one school system (5 schools) and that generalizations from their performance must be made with that fact clearly in mind.

Nonetheless the design seems adequate to examine the relative impact of four (4) methodologies on the learning, attitudes, and motivations of inner city youth. These methodologies, in order of their predicted effectiveness, are as follows:

1) Placement in a suburban system with supportive team assistance.
2) Placement in a suburban system without supportive team assistance.
3) Placement in an inner city school with supportive team assistance.
4) Placement in an inner city school without supportive team assistance.

Ss assigned to treatment procedures one (1) and two (2) above are considered to be Experimental Ss since they are subject to the impact of the major variable under study: placement in a radically different educational environment. Ss assigned to treatment procedures three (3) and four (4) above are classified as controls. As described above all Ss were drawn from the same population in a random fashion. Schematically, the design is as follows:

	Experimental Groups				Control Groups			
Grade	With Support		Without Support		With Support		Without Support	
	N	Schools	N	Schools	N	Schools	N	Schools
Kdg.	32	8	14	3	--	--	50	1
1	38	9	5	2	18	1	40	2
2	47	9	2	2	15	1	40	2
3	30	7	7	3	15	1	40	2
4	25	6	8	4	15	1	40	2
5	41	9	6	2	--	--	40	1

The criterion variables which will serve as basis for evaluating the effect of the treatment variables (suburban school placement and supportive team assistance) can be grouped into four (4) general headings:

a) Mental Ability

1. Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children
2. Primary Mental Abilities

b) Academic Achievement

1. Reading
2. Listening
3. Arthmetic

c) Personal-Social Development

1. Sociometric Status
2. Test Anxiety
3. Attitudes
4. Teacher Ratings
5. School Attendance
6. Vocational Aspiration

d) Creativity

1. Picture Completion
2. Circles

These data will be collected at four points: September, 1966, as a base; May, 1967, to evaluate effects after one year; September, 1967, to assess loss during the summer; May, 1968, to evaluate effects after two years. The basic statistical tests to be used will be analyses of variance and covariance. All data will be analyzed for the interaction of the following variables with the primary variables: age, sex, grade placement, school system, and, where the N permits, school.

In addition, case study materials reported on a weekly basis by teachers will be utilized in an attempt to discover patterns of growth and development. Along with this approach there will be data collected which will indicate parental involvement and attitude as well as neighborhood reaction to a child's placement in the suburbs. It is anticipated that there will be significantly greater growth for the Experimental Ss as a group, but it is also hoped that evidence as to most productive and effective intervention for pupils with differing characteristics may be revealed by careful manipulation of the results.

The techniques described above will be employed on the total samples. However, it is expected that smaller samples drawn from these samples will be used to study other areas such as speech improvement, frustration tolerance, and personality variables. The major outcomes of the Project will be evaluated from this design framework by means of the following specific hypothesis stated here as predictions. For operational purposes, a "statistically significant difference" shall be defined as a deviation of such magnitude that its likelihood of occurring by chance does not exceed one in twenty.

1) Experimental Ss will have significantly greater gain scores than control Ss in:

   a) all measures of mental ability
   b) all measures of academic achievement
   c) all measures of cognitive flexibility (creativity)

2) Experimental Ss will show significantly greater decrease than control Ss in measures of:

   a) general anxiety
   b) test anxiety

3) Experimental Ss will not differ significantly from control Ss in sociometric measures of:

   a) acceptance by classroom peers
   b) acceptance by neighborhood peers

4) Analysis of teacher report data on Experimental Ss will show a pattern of sequential responses which follows the following trend for Ss who show significant gains in academic performance: uncritical acceptance by the teacher; more realistic appraisal by the teacher, but with a tendency to emphasize assets; a tendency to recall and report successes and achievements; attainment of a plateau in terms of reporting pupil behavior as being relatively unexceptional and consistent.

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